

Isaiah 43:16-21
Psalm 126
Philippians 3:4b-14
John 12:1-8

Sermon April 3rd, 2022

God Cares for Us in Our Dying

Dying, whether it is someone we love who is dying, or our own dying experience, this is the hardest experience we go through during our life time. From dealing with a complex set of emotions where we feel like we are on a never-ending emotional rollercoaster ride (**Image**). To the grief that overwhelms us when we have to say goodbye to those people and things that we love. From the uncertainty that surrounds us when we stand face to face with death. To the exhaustion we feel, with all the time and energy we need to give to this process. Dying is the hardest experience we go through during our life time.

Some of us here may be walking with someone in our lives who is dying as I share these words with you this morning. Some of us may have at some point in our past walked with someone in their dying. All of us at some point will find ourselves in this process either as a support person for someone who is dying, or we ourselves, will inevitably end up dying.

Unfortunately, with life comes death. And even though many people in our society try to ignore this reality, the pandemic, the war, an aging population have forced us to start talking about how we as individuals, and we as a community, support people in their dying (**Image**)? As well as, how do we set up the supports we need when we go through the dying process?

In our gospel this morning, Jesus is preparing himself for what he is about to face when he enters Jerusalem. Death. Jesus has been predicting his death for a while now, and knows that when he enters Jerusalem to challenge the authorities, that there is a strong possibility that he is arrested and killed for his protest. Jesus is preparing for his death.

And like many people we know who have died, in the days leading up to their death, they often find comfort in spending time with the people who mean the most to them. For Jesus, some of his closest friends are Lazarus, Martha, and Mary. As well as his disciples.

Jesus has come to say his goodbyes.

Well, in reaction to Jesus' dying, Mary anoints Jesus (**Image**). Mary takes a very expensive perfume, and wipes Jesus' feet with it. Mary sees the burden of grief Jesus is carrying inside himself, and offers him an anointing so he can endure the road ahead. So, he is prepared for his burial.

When Judas gets angry at Mary for doing this, Jesus confronts Judas. Jesus states that caring for the dying is so important that not even helping the poor should deter them.

This is a profound statement in encouraging us as a community to care for those who are dying. Jesus loves those who live in poverty. Jesus spends much time with these people. Jesus would never want us to take these words as a reason not to help the poor.

And yet, Jesus sees the struggle that comes with dying. Jesus sees the need that comes with dying. Jesus sees the emotional turmoil that comes with dying. As much as Jesus' ministry is for the poor, the central purpose of Jesus' ministry is to face death for us so that we can bear witness to the resurrection where Jesus gives us hope that even in our dying, we will experience new life. We will experience God.

Through his life, death, and resurrection, through scripture, through prayer, through the people who care for us (**Image**), Jesus wants us to see that God walks with us in our dying. Turning our dying into new life.

Whether it is a physical death of our human body or the death of a relationship or the death of a job or the death of an organization or the death of an era.

God is there turning our dying into new life.

Yes. Death hurts. It causes us pain. But there is hope in Christ Jesus, that death on the cross leads to the witness of the empty tomb. The witness of the resurrected Christ.

And it is this hope that empowers us as disciples of Christ, to care for the dying in our community. To help them see that God is walking with them in their dying. To help them see that God will lead them from death to new life.

As Mary is doing for Jesus.

As Jesus does for us.

As we do for our neighbour.

Let us pray, loving God, comfort us in our grief. Give us hope in your promise of new life when we face dying. Empower us by your Spirit to care for those who are dying. In Jesus name we pray. **Amen.**